

Outcome Team Vibrant Communities

FY 07 Budget Priority Setting
MULTNOMAH COUNTY OREGON

March 10, 2006

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I. Priority – Result to be realized, as expressed by citizens –

I want to have clean, healthy neighborhoods with a vibrant sense of community.

II. Indicators of Success – How the County will know if progress is being made on the result

1. Environmental and Health Index – Available late 2006

Source: The Sustainable Development Commission, a citizen advisory board to Multnomah County and the City of Portland, is planning to work with Portland State University to develop and present a “Sustainable Community Report Card” to elected officials and the community. This set of indicators will be used to measure progress toward a sustainable future. It will also measure county progress to supporting “clean, healthy neighborhoods with a vibrant sense of community”. It will be a visible communication tool to inform residents, businesses, and local government about how we are doing as a community related to a specific set of sustainability indicators. An example of this kind of indicator can be found in the Cascadia Scorecard www.northwestwatch.org/scorecard/. This report card is tentatively scheduled to be available in late Fall 2006.

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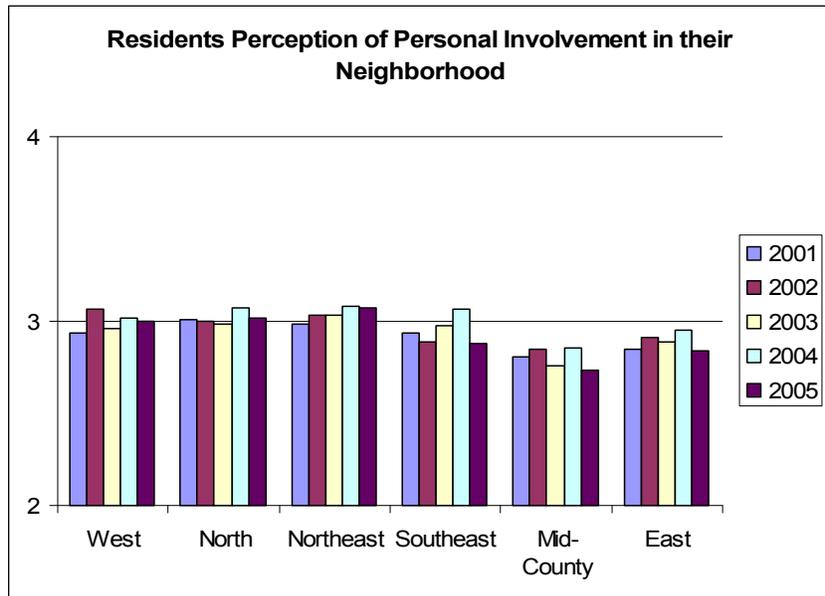
2. Citizen Perception of Personal Involvement in Neighborhoods

This chart shows data by area of the county taken from the Auditor’s Office’s annual Citizen Survey. It is an average of responses to these three questions:

1. Many of my neighbors know me.
2. I can recognize most of the people who live on my block.
3. I regularly stop and talk with the people in my neighborhood.

Responses are reported on a scale of 1-4, with 4 showing the strongest level of agreement with the statement.

There was generally little variation between areas of the county for this index. Residents in Mid-county and East county identify as slightly less personally involved in their neighborhoods than other areas of the county. The score was down slightly in 2005 for each district.



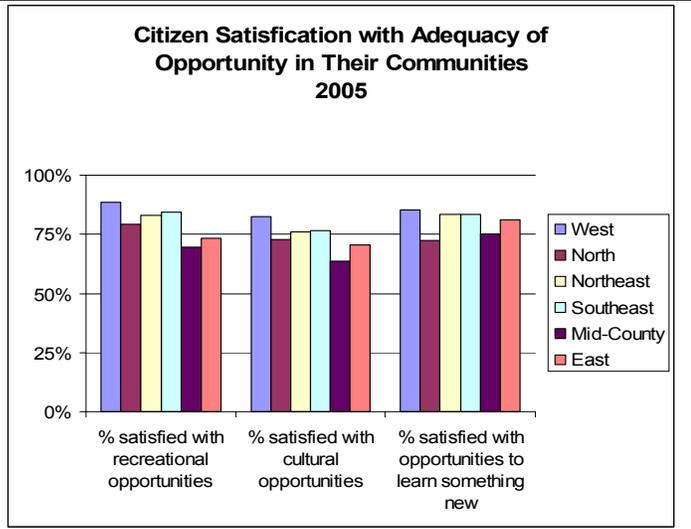
Source: Multnomah County Auditor’s Office Citizen Survey

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3. Citizen Perception of Adequacy of Cultural, Recreational, and Lifelong Learning Opportunities

Beginning in 2005, the annual Citizen Survey asked residents to rate their satisfaction with cultural, recreational, and lifelong learning opportunities in their communities.

Respondents were highly satisfied with these opportunities. Generally, residents in West, Northeast, and Southeast noted the highest level of satisfaction on all three questions, with East county noticeably higher on learning opportunities. Residents in North and Mid-County expressed slightly lower levels of satisfaction.



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III. Map of Key Factors – Cause-effect map of factors that influence/produce the result

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INDICATORS

1. Healthy Environment Index
2. Personal Involvement Index
3. Opportunities for Improving and Enjoying Life

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As the FY07 Outcome Team reviewed the strategy map, we found ourselves using the terms “community” and “neighborhood” interchangeably, yet the priority differentiates between clean, healthy neighborhoods and a sense of community. Therefore, we decided to define the terms and use them as defined throughout this report.

In our minds, a “neighborhood” is a physical location – the place people live. The “community” is a group of people with a common connection. Thus, a community could be based on a physical location, but it could also be a community of interests that brings individuals together from different neighborhoods. An individual has one neighborhood but could have multiple communities – all of which contribute to feeling connected and thus experiencing a vibrant sense of community.

Our team made only one change to the strategy map. Under factor #1, Healthy Environment, we deleted sub-factor #4 – Personal Choices, and replaced it with Clean and Safe Neighborhoods. We felt that this change more closely aligns the County’s work in providing basic neighborhood systems (animal services, rodent and pest control, for example) with the map. It also ties more directly to the language of the priority itself.

We agree with the previous team’s choice of factors and the strong impact of the other priorities on Vibrant Communities as reflected on the map. The map reflects the fact that many of the factors identified by the other five Priority Teams contribute to the relatively broad outcome of *“I want to have clean, healthy neighborhoods with a vibrant sense of community.”* This relationship is represented on the map but with no further work around identifying factors, sub-factors, strategies, or indicators. This map reflects the three major factors that could be considered relatively unique contributors to this outcome.

The idea of measuring vibrancy is fairly new. Most of the evidence did provide consistent insight into the factors that build vibrant communities, but there was minimal guidance as to the relative importance of each individual factor. The model of factor dominance portrayed on the map is described below. We recognize that this dominance selection is at least in part influenced by the values that are manifested in Multnomah County in ways such as environmental awareness, land use decisions, and public support for education and libraries. Those values are the reason that many people choose to live here.

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Healthy Environment is the dominant factor for clean, healthy neighborhoods.

The prioritization between Healthy Environment and the second highest factor, Valued and Engaged Citizens, was challenging. Ultimately we determined that the health of the environment is fundamental to the outcome. We are familiar with living in an environment that, with some notable exceptions, is clean and healthy. Careful planning has led to accessible transportation choices; clean air, water and soil; beautiful parks and greenspace (including the largest urban forest in the country) and bike paths. In addition, nuisance control and prevention of health hazards is critical in maintaining clean, healthy neighborhoods.

Valued and engaged citizens are the second most dominant factor for vibrant communities.

There is substantial evidence in the literature that interactive neighbors, meaningful community involvement, a sense of place and diversity within the population lead to a vibrant sense of community. People who recognize their neighbors and are recognized by them care about what happens to one another. When they feel a sense of place and a sense of belonging to a larger group, they're more likely to care about what happens to that place and those people. Feeling a part of their community and being actively engaged in decisions that directly affect their lives help people develop a sense of responsibility for what goes on in their neighborhoods.

There is further evidence that suggests that providing community places (such as libraries, community centers, and green spaces) where neighbors can interact and actively pursue their common interests also increases their sense of community. By meeting residents' need for human connection, synergies are formed that ultimately result in increased community activity and involvement.

Opportunities for improving and enjoying life are the third factor for vibrant communities.

Learning, recreation and involvement in cultural events are all strong contributors to improving and enjoying life. Residents of a vibrant community have access to educational, cultural, and recreational opportunities that honor diversity and serve their needs from infancy through the retirement years. Providing access to residents across the county by optimizing the use of community facilities, breaking down cultural and economic barriers and ensuring that activities reflect the diverse needs of individuals and neighborhoods will contribute to the community's vibrancy.

IV. Selection Strategies and Request for Offers – *Focused choices to realize results*

Strategy #1: Champion a sustainable environment with clean, healthy neighborhoods.

Multnomah County recognizes that the top primary factor contributing to this priority area is the quality of the environment as it impacts neighborhoods, the places where people live, work, and play. For many residents, the sense of neighborhood and community is strongest in the several block area around their home.

Best management practices for sustainability can reduce the use of resources and energy to prevent the pollution of air, water, and land; to reduce wastes at the source; and to minimize risks to human populations and the environment. A sustainability framework recognizes the relationships among the economy, ecology, and community and requires that all agencies consider these inter-connected issues in their programs and policies. A sustainability framework can provide a means for dealing with the pressures in allocating scarce natural resources among competing needs. Sustainability can also break the cycle of crisis-driven issue management to a systematic approach that integrates environmental concerns with economic and social issues. This type of systematic, collaborative approach may result in better environmental and social outcomes at lower costs.

A community is only able to thrive when basic neighborhood systems are functioning such as the provision of clean water, rodent and pest control, animal services, and other infrastructure systems. As we've seen in the hurricane aftermath of recent months, there is no opportunity for a vibrant community when residents are struggling with basic survival needs. When these needs are consistently met, neighbors can turn their attention to connecting with others in the community and enjoying a sense of pride in the livability of their neighborhood.

Currently, Multnomah County has two primary roles in this effort:

1. As an employer, we can lead by adopting sustainable internal government business practices;
2. As a key stakeholder in the metropolitan area, we can be a regional partner and have a clear, consistent presence in processes where another agency is the lead player.

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We are looking for program offers that:

- Promote sustainability in internal operations and as a stakeholder in regional partnerships.
- Support clean, healthy neighborhoods by assisting the public in resolving neighborhood nuisances involving animals and by preventing health hazards.

Strategy #2: Provide places and promote opportunities for neighbors to connect.

Community spaces make a substantial contribution to the overall quality of life in any community. Such places create a welcoming atmosphere of accessibility, vitality, and safety. They can connect people with resources that significantly enhance their lives and boost the well-being of the entire community.

In 2000, Harvard published a plan for rebuilding community ties. Among many strategies, the plan underlined the importance of day-to-day interaction among neighbors. Communities need places for residents to enjoy their leisure time, to share beliefs together, receive public services, broaden their knowledge of the world, as well as somewhere they can challenge their minds. Civic spaces where all citizens can meet, interact, access information that is meaningful to them, and develop life skills are essential in weaving the social fabric. Community facilities such as parks, places of worship, community centers and libraries are neighborhood assets that make it possible for residents to gather and promote a common identity of shared experiences.

Vibrant communities can benefit from processes that bring people together to explore issues, build solutions and take action. Research has shown that positive day-to-day interaction among neighbors develops understanding between them and leads to a higher sense of community than when people do not have regular contact with their neighbors. Organizations such as the World Bank and Fannie Mae have recognized the crucial role of community identity and “social capital” as critical in solving deep-seated problems such as poverty and housing.

We are looking for program offers that:

- Provide public opportunities and/or gathering spaces where neighbors can meet and interact.

Strategy #3: Promote literacy and a lifetime of learning.

Opportunities for improving the lives of citizens are important factors in supporting a vibrant community. These include the actions of supporting literacy and lifelong learning.

The connection between adult literacy and a vibrant community are clear: 43% of all adults who read at the lowest level of literacy are living in poverty, compared with only 4% of adults who read at the highest level. In Multnomah County, fully 15% of adults are reading at the lowest level. The county's Poverty Elimination Framework advocates for a skilled workforce, and literacy is critical to the identified goal of moving people from low wage to living wage jobs. Research shows that when older adults have strong literacy skills, they are more likely to be self-sufficient in meeting their basic needs. Literacy programs outside the realm of formal education offer an avenue for learning otherwise closed to many county residents.

Learning throughout life, from the cradle to the grave, is critical in helping people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities to succeed. Lifelong learning is defined as all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence, within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective. It promotes the development of knowledge and competencies that will enable each resident to adapt to the knowledge-based society and actively participate in all spheres of social and economic life, taking more control of his or her future. Learning opportunities should be available to all residents on an ongoing basis, so that each person can have an individual learning pathway, suitable to his or her needs and interests at all stages of life.

We are looking for program offers that:

- Provide literacy education programs, especially in targeted low socio-economic neighborhoods.
- Provide opportunities and resources for lifelong learning.

Strategy #4: Provide a variety of cultural and recreational opportunities, particularly before and after school.

An important part of a vibrant community is the activities that citizens can engage in outside of work and school. These cultural and recreational activities make our community a fun place to live, and attractive to businesses. Activities that reflect the diverse needs of individuals and neighborhoods also break down cultural and economic barriers.

Cultural and recreational activities enrich the lives of members of our community and contribute to a community's sense of cultural and social diversity. For example, programs that fund and facilitate after-school arts education programs in schools use arts activities to teach tolerance, creative expression, and improve academic

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performance. Arts and culture programs for youth help provide a critical alternative to delinquent youth behavior.

In addition, research by the organization Fight Crime: Invest in Kids shows that children who regularly attend high-quality out-of-school programs are more likely to be engaged in school and less likely to participate in delinquent or high risk activities such as experimentation with alcohol, drugs and sex. The Seattle Police Chief is quoted in their 2000 report as having said, “It’s a lot cheaper to pay now for after school programs, than to pay later to put kids in jail.” Since peak hours for juveniles to engage in community disturbance crimes are from 3 to 6PM, after-school programs help to prevent crime, as well as teach skills and values. These after school programs (and also before school programs) respond to the need for quality childcare, highlighted in the Early Childhood Framework. Through out-of-school activities, children can develop social skills, improve their academic performance, and establish strong relationships with caring adults.

We are looking for program offers that:

- Consistently and visibly support local programs that provide ongoing cultural and recreational opportunities for members of the county’s communities.
- Provide a place and appropriate activities for school-age children during the critical after school hours.

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V. Program Ranking (Composite Report)

Program #	Name	Department	Rank	Score	es Recei		
					H	M	L
80000B	Central Library-Current Service Level	LIB	1	18	6	0	0
80001B	Regional Libraries-Current Service Level	LIB	1	18	6	0	0
80002B	Neighborhood Libraries-Current Service Level	LIB	1	18	6	0	0
80000A	Central Library-Base Level	LIB	4	16	4	2	0
80001A	Regional Libraries-Base Level	LIB	4	16	4	2	0
91003A	Animal Services Shelter Operations - Reduced Service L	DCS	6	15	4	1	1
72003	Sustainability Team	DCM	7	15	3	3	0
91002A	Animal Services Field Services - Reduced Service Level	DCS	8	14	4	0	2
91020B	Land Use Planning - Current Service	DCS	9	14	2	4	0
80007A	Adult Outreach-Current Service Level	LIB	9	14	2	4	0
91020A	Land Use Planning - Reduced Service	DCS	11	13	3	1	2
91002B	Animal Services Field Services - Current Service Level...	DCS	12	13	2	3	1
91004	Animal Services Spay and Neuter Program	DCS	12	13	2	3	1
91003B	Animal Services Shelter Operations - Current Service Le	DCS	14	12	1	4	1
91005	Tax Title	DCS	15	11	1	3	2
80002C	Neighborhood Libraries-Restore FY 04 Level	LIB	15	11	1	3	2
72009	Bus Pass Program	DCM	17	10	1	2	3
72017	Recreation Fund Payment to Metro	DCM	17	10	1	2	3
10024	Regional Arts & Culture Council	NonD	17	10	1	2	3
80000C	Central Library-Restore FY 04 Level	LIB	20	9	0	3	3
80001C	Regional Libraries-Restore FY 04 Level	LIB	20	9	0	3	3
80024	Troutdale Neighborhood Library	LIB	22	8	0	2	4
10040	Parent Leadership/Community Organizing for Family Issi	NonD	23	7	0	1	5
80007B	Adult Outreach-Enhanced	LIB	24	6	0	0	6
80025	New Columbia Neighborhood Library	LIB	24	6	0	0	6

VI. Program Ranking Discussion

The Vibrant Communities team received 25 offers, with the largest number (11) coming from the Library. Five of the Library's offers (80000A & B, 80001A & B, 80002B) ranked in the top third, as these programs align with two of the Priority's three main factors: Valued & Engaged Citizens and Opportunities for Improving & Enjoying Life. Two Animal Services offers were in the top third (91003A, 91002A), along with Sustainability (72003) and Land Use Planning – Current Service (91020B). These offers support the Healthy Environment factor of the strategy map.

Animal Services Field Services/Reduced Service Level (91002A) and Land Use Planning/Reduced Services (91020A) were the only offers that received a split high/low vote. This was likely due to some confusion over the difference between reduced and current service level offers. Those offers were renamed (both are now shown as "Base") to avoid similar confusion when the Board ranks these programs.

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Most (63%) of the offers that fell into the bottom third were restored, enhanced or new Library programs (80000C, 80001C, 80024, 80007B, 80025). Though it appears these would contribute strongly to the Priority, we felt it was critical to rank existing and proven Library programs higher.

Recreation Fund Payment to Metro (72017) also ranked low, primarily because there are no performance measures or indicators as to how Metro is using this money. Regional Arts & Culture Council (10024) ranked low due to a lack of performance measures.

Parent Leadership/Community Organizing for Family Issues (10040) is a new program offer that ranked low. We felt the offer did not adequately define the need that this program would meet or explain the outcomes that the program has achieved in its pilot project at Kelly School (through Portland Schools Alliance). There is also concern about what results could be demonstrated with one year of funding.

The Bus Pass Program (72009) ranked just above the bottom third. Though this program does support the Priority's Sustainability factor, there is concern about its cost effectiveness.

VII. Policy Issues

Though this Priority only received one pass through offer (Recreation Fund Payment to Metro, 72017), we agree with the Thriving Economy report that pass through payments should be reviewed and analyzed outside of the ranking process.

For the FY07 process the Thriving Economy and Vibrant Community priority areas were combined under one Outcome Team. The team observed an overlap in contributing factors, a limited number of Program Offers to be addressed in each area, and a relatively small number of discretionary General Fund dollars expended in these areas. In the future the County may wish to consider whether these should be separate priority areas. This could be a topic for the Design Team to address prior to undertaking the process for FY08.